REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the *Backhaus, et al.* patent (U.S. 6,272,572 and hereinafter also referred to as *Backhaus*) in view of the patent to *Stoel, et al.* (U.S. 6,343,315 and hereinafter also referred to as *Stoel*). Independent Claims 1, 14, and 21 have been amended. Claims 4, 19, 20, 22, 25 and 26 have been cancelled. New dependent claims 27-31 have been added. Reconsideration of the rejection of Claims 1-3, 5-18, 21 and 23-24, as well as consideration of new Claims 27-31, is respectfully requested.

The present invention is directed to a hotel system for making desired services available to a relatively large number of guest rooms. A limitation exists on the number of guest rooms that can be properly serviced when using a master host and an intelligent communications processor (ICP). Specifically, the ICP is used in connecting the host to the guest rooms and there is a finite number of guest rooms to which it can be connected. The present invention overcomes this problem by means of a novel configuration that encompasses one or more of the master host, slave host, a property management system (PMS), and one or more digital content servers (DCS). The PMS is typically part of and owned by the hotel. The hotel uses the PMS to track room status and room charges. The master host can be installed with this typical hotel system, particularly being able to communicate with the hotel PMS. Accordingly, when communications are made with the guest rooms, the present invention provides a unique communications path and protocol that enables and facilitates the transfer of information. The present invention can also have a combination of elements that continues to provide certain desired services even when the master host is unavailable or not operating for some reason. In particular, the slave host has control over certain functions associated with providing such desired services. The digital content servers can provide additional content on demand to requesting guest rooms. Additionally or alternatively, one or more DCSs are not dependent on the master host for proper

or continued operation. Instead, such DCSs communicates directly with a slave host so that providing digital content is not interrupted when the master host experiences a fault or ceases operation. These novel and non-obvious aspects are emphasized in the amended independent claims and are not disclosed or suggested by the prior art references.

The *Backhaus* patent discloses a system for handling telephone and passenger service signals (PSS) in an aircraft. The system includes a zone bridge unit (ZBU) 124 that supports multiple chains 106, 126 that can be associated with the determined zones or sections of the aircraft. Each chain has a number of inter-connected seat electronic units ("SEUs") 108, 112, 120. Each SEU provides audio and video signals to passenger seats. The ZBU 124 includes a Zone Interface Module (ZIM) 204. The ZIM 204 is responsive to signals from telephone lines 212, passenger service signal lines 216 and audio lines 220. The ZIM 214 includes multiplexor circuitry 241 for handling signals provided to the SEUs. An interconnect PAT (passenger service system/audio telephone) bus bi-directionally carries telephone and passenger service signals traveling between the multiplexor 241 of the ZIM 214 and the SEUs. The telecommunications unit (TCU) 125 transmits the telephone signals to the ZBU 124. During operations, the ZIM 214 initiates data transfers. The SEUs respond to the ZIM 214 to complete the data transfer cycle. The system also includes the system manager unit (SMU) 152 that oversees operation of the in-flight entertainment system. The SMU 152 is coupled to a display device 156 which displays passenger requests and system status information. The *Backhaus* patent is deficient in a number of respects as it relates to the present invention including lack of digital content servers configured as required by the present invention and the inability to continue certain operations when a master host is down or otherwise unavailable.

The *Stoel* patent describes an information/entertainment system characterized by a host having an ICP for communications with guestrooms. However, this patent does not address the problem and solutions of the present invention related to a hotel system with a relatively large number of rooms. Consequently, it lacks any teaching related to a master host and a number of slave hosts, as well as being deficient in the use and configuration of digital content servers.

With reference to amended Claim 1, certain patentable features are now recited. Claim 1 calls for, among other things, first and second slave subsystems. The first slave subsystem has a first slave host. The second slave subsystem has a second slave host. The first slave subsystem is associated with the first group of rooms and the second slave subsystem is associated with a second group of rooms. This claim also requires a first digital content server (DCS) and a second DCS. The first DCS communicates directly with the first slave subsystem. The second DCS communicates directly with the second slave host subsystem. When the master host is not available, video content can be provided by the first DCS to the first set of rooms using the first slave subsystem.

In contrast, the *Backhaus* patent does not disclose two separate digital content servers. Moreover, it lacks any disclosure that each of these two digital content servers communicates directly with its respective slave subsystem whereby communications need not occur between each of theses DCSs and the master host. More specifically, as described in column 3, lines 50-55 and column 7, lines 25-56 of the *Backhaus* patent, reference is made to the ZIM 204, 514 as the master and the SEU's 233, 236, 240, 508 as the slaves. The ZIM 204 is a sub-portion of the ZBU 124 illustrated in Fig 1A. Unlike the present invention, if the master (ZIM) is not operating, then the multiplexed PSS and telephone signals cannot be transmitted to the SEU's. In contradistinction, Claim 1 requires that, when the master host is not available, the video

content can be provided by the DCS to the first group of rooms using the first slave subsystem. It is clear that this does not and cannot occur in the *Backhaus* invention since the unavailability of the ZBU 124 disables communications to the SEU's.

If it were argued that the master host is the system manager unit 152, and not one or more ZBU's 124, such would still not meet the terms of Claim 1. The SMU 152 oversees operation of the in-flight entertainment system. The SMU 152 provides passenger request and system status information for display by the display device 156 (see column 3, lines 22-26). If the SMU 152 were unavailable or inoperative, no suggestion is found in the *Backhaus* patent to the effect that the ZBU's and/or SEU's could continue to function properly. Indeed, since the SMU oversees operation of the system, if it were unavailable, the reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that such a system would not be properly functional. Furthermore, each ZIM 204 receives PSS signals on line 216. It appears that such PSS signals are associated with the SMU 152. Consequently, in the absence of the SMU, passenger service signals could not be properly provided to it.

The contents of the Stoel patent is even less material to the claimed invention since it does not teach the elements of Claim 1. Furthermore, it fails to disclose the deficiencies of *Backhaus* as applied to this claim.

If the rejection of Claim 1, as now amended, should be maintained, it is respectfully requested that it be pointed out with particularity how all recited elements including their arrangements with each other and proper functioning thereof, particularly the arrangements and operations of the digital content servers including when the master host is not available, are disclosed in the prior art of record. Unless a *prima facie* showing can be made to that effect, Claim 1 should now be allowed.

Claim 14 is an independent claim that also relates to the important feature of continuing operation when the master host is unable to communicate with the first slave host. This inventive aspect is based on the description found in the patent application specification on page 18, lines 18-43 and page 19, lines 1-6. Specifically, unlike the prior art, the present invention allows one or more services to be available to hotel rooms, while one or more other services are not available, when the master host cannot properly communicate with the slave host. This feature ensures that desired operations can continue even when the master host is at least not fully operational. As an example and not to be limited thereto, a service that can be available includes providing of digital content using a digital content server. A service that would not be available if the master host could not communicate with the first slave host might be a video checkout service.

In contrast, the *Backhaus* patent describes master/slave relationships in which no suggestion is made that one or more services could be provided to passengers when the master could not communicate with the slave. In point of fact, if the ZIM 204 of the ZBU 124 did not communicate with its associated slaves, providing services using PSS and telephone signals would not be available. Likewise, if it were asserted that the master host corresponds to the SMU 152, while the ZBU's and SEU's correspond to the slave subsystems, there is no disclosure or suggestion in the *Backhaus* patent to the effect that one or more services can still be provided to passengers when there is a lack of communication between the SMU and the ZBU. Instead, the *Backhaus* patent teaches that the SMU oversees the entire system and is involved with passenger requests and system status, which results in the conclusion that without the SMU the system cannot continue to provide the services anticipated by the *Backhaus* invention.

The Stoel patent also lacks any disclosure or teaching that corresponds to the recited allowing feature set out in Claim 14.

If the Examiner should maintain the rejection of Claim 14, Applicants respectfully request that it be pointed out with specificity how the contents of the *Backhaus* patent teaches the allowing step recited in Claim 14, particularly delivery of a first service when the master host cannot communicate with the first slave host, while a second service is unavailable to the first room. In the absence of a *prima facie* showing to that effect, independent method Claim 14 should now be allowed.

The remaining independent claim is method Claim 21. This claim is directed to the inventive aspect of combining a master/slave system with technology already present in the lodging facility, namely the property management system (PMS). Typically, the PMS is already being used by the lodging facility in connection with performing various, common functions, such as related to guest check-in, guest check-out and room status. This method claim relates to the integration or cooperation involving such a PMS. More specifically, Claim 21 calls for, among other things, relaying a request based on a command from a guest room to the master host by the first slave host in order to communicate with the PMS. In contrast, according to the *Backhaus* patent, communications are between the ZBU's and one or more SEU's. There is no command from a passenger that is communicated to a PMS through a master host. Claim 21 further recites formatting the request by the master host so that it can be sent to the PMS. No teaching or suggestion is found in the *Backhaus* patent for this particular step because there is no teaching that any such request is sent to a PMS or any other comparable element and particularly through a master host that formats the request. Claim 21 also requires interpreting the request by the PMS. The written description of the *Backhaus* system and method of operation fails to

disclose any comparable step. Instead, the *Backhaus* patent teaches a SMU that communicates with a display device, which is not a PMS that interprets a request that it receives. Claim 21 also requires the sending of a response by the PMS to the master host based on the request, forwarding the response by the master host to the first slave host and processing the response by the first slave host. The *Backhaus* patent lacks any disclosure related to generation of a response by an element that corresponds to the PMS, that is sent to a master host and then forwarded for processing by a first slave host. Rather, the *Backhaus* patent describes interactions and operations related to a ZBU (master) and SEU's (slaves). Again, the specific and unique involvements with, and communications by, a PMS, as recited in this claim, are not found in the *Backhaus* patent.

Again, the Stoel patent does not disclose the elements conducting the recited method of Claim 21. Moreover, its teachings fail to overcome the deficiencies of the *Backhaus* patent.

If the rejection of amended Claim 21 is not withdrawn, it is respectfully requested that it clearly be shown how the prior art teaches all elements of the claim, together with their recited operations and their recited interactions. If this cannot be demonstrated in a *prima facie* manner, Claim 21 should now be allowed.

Claims 2-3, 5-13, 15-18 and 23-24 are originally filed dependent claims that depend from one of the independent Claims 1, 14 and 21. These claims recite further patentable subject matter and should also be allowed.

Consideration of new dependent Claims 27-31 is also respectfully requested. These claims further define more inventive features over those recited in independent claims 14 and 21. Accordingly, these claims should also be allowed.

No fee is believed to be due in connection with the filing of this Amendment and Response. If any such fee is due, please charge to Account No. 19-1970. A sincere effort has been made to place the application in condition for allowance. Early notice of such allowance is, therefore, solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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